



**SEIUHealthcare.**  
United for Quality Care

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DOC - Macdougall-Walker  
Torrington  
SEIU District 1199 New England  
Before the Appropriations Committee

***In Support of HR 11 and SR 12: RESOLUTION PROPOSING APPROVAL OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT AND THE STATE EMPLOYEES BARGAINING AGENT COALITION (SEBAC)***

Good Morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Committee. My name is Shirley Watson and I am a Clinical Social Worker with the Department of Corrections. I have been a Mental Health Clinician at this facility for almost eight years and I have been a state employee for an additional fifteen years. I am here today to testify in support of House Resolution 11 and Senate Resolution 12.

I believe some people look at the negative rhetoric surrounding the contents of the 1199 SEBAC Bargaining Agreement and don't understand how the community benefits from this contract being approved. This isn't just about public sector workers. We do not exist in a vacuum. We are your neighbors, taxpayers, volunteer group leaders, fellow church congregants, caretakers, and family members. The services we provide directly impact your family members, friends, acquaintances, and many others. It will also indirectly impact our communities in many other ways. The SEBAC Agreement is an important step in supporting the work we do and will aid in the recruitment of more qualified and dedicated staff.

The real problems that the Yankee Institute and others choose to ignore is that we are short-staffed, we have diminished healthcare services, and the services that are offered currently cannot keep up with the need. If you haven't heard some of the heartbreaking testimony from my colleagues and agency peers about the present and burgeoning crises caused by short staffing and diminished healthcare services, you should listen to our Appropriations Budget Hearing testimony to see what issues really matter.

**Imagine having to tell an inmate asking for a mental health consult that, "we have no one to see you right now, can you wait?" Depression doesn't wait. If it progresses to suicidal ideation, it won't still wait. Anxiety doesn't wait. Does anyone on this panel truly believe mental health issues are resolved by waiting? Would anyone on this panel accept delayed healthcare services for their loved ones?**

The people who receive the services that we deliver are some of the most vulnerable, disenfranchised, and marginalized folks in the state. In DOC and many other agencies, these folks are largely people of color. In my experience, offenders who have felt supported and listened to will be less hesitant to seek similar services once returned to the community. Thus, addressing issues early and with reduced negative consequences. If we can hire more state workers and expand services then we will save lives. This contract allows the state and its communities to be better prepared to address pandemics, racial justice issues, job stability, gender equality and so much more. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "One's philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes." As a daughter, sister, Social Worker, community volunteer, person of color, colleague, constituent, and proud Connecticut resident, I am asking you to make the right choice: vote "yes" and support services.

Thank you for your time and attention.